



COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Town Council

From: Evan Ross, Chair, Outreach, Communications, & Appointments Committee (OCA)

Date: 12-22-2019, for 1-06-2020 Town Council meeting

Since the last Council meeting OCA met once, on 12-20-2019, and will meet the morning of 1-6-2020. At its meeting on 12-20-2020 OCA voted 3-0-0 (Councilors Brewer, Ross, and Ryan voted yes; Councilors DuMont and Swartz were absent) to recommend that the Town Council appoint liaisons per Charter Sec. 2.9(d) to the following multiple-member bodies:

- Affordable Housing Trust
- Board of Health
- Board of License Commissioners
- Community Preservation Act Committee
- Council on Aging
- Disability Access Advisory Committee
- LSSE Commission
- Transportation Advisory Committee
- Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board

This report details the process for selecting these nine multiple-member bodies, and the rationale for each.

OCA Liaisons Deliberations

To OCA's great benefit, the Ad Hoc Rules of Procedure Committee had considered which multiple-member bodies or elected bodies (hereafter "committees") might warrant a Town Council liaison, grouped existing committees into three priority groups, and produced an Excel spreadsheet and a report detailing their decisions. Ad Hoc Rules of Procedure Committee Chair Brewer and member DuMont are also members of OCA and offered their recollections of the discussions. OCA used all this information as a jumping off point for its discussion.

OCA first established criteria that we could use to evaluate whether each committee should have a liaison. While OCA took no vote on specific criteria, the discussion focused on committees that:

- regularly submit proposed policies and bylaws to the Town Council for action by the Town Council (not including resolutions, proclamations, commemorations, or citations).
- promulgate regulations that have significant impacts on Town residents or businesses, regardless of whether those regulations require Town Council action.
- distribute funds sourced from local taxes.



In advance of the meeting, I added two columns to the Excel spreadsheet developed by the Ad Hoc Rules of Procedure Committee with the results of the sticker vote from the 9-21-2019 Town Council retreat. One column contained the number of Councilors who voted in support of a liaison for that committee, and another column that contained the number of Councilors who reported having attended a meeting of that committee. I then highlighted all committees for which a majority of Councilors voted to support a liaison assignment. The spreadsheet is attached in Appendix A. OCA then went through the spreadsheet and discussed whether to recommend a liaison to each committee in the following order:

- All committees in priority group 1 that received votes from a majority of Councilors (7+ votes)
- All committees in priority group 1 that received fewer than seven votes
- All committees in priority groups 2 and 3 that received votes from a majority of Councilors (7+ votes)
- All committees in priority groups 2 and 3 that received 3-6 votes
- All committees in priority groups 2 and 3 that received fewer than 3 votes

The Councilor votes from the retreat helped structure and inform OCA's discussion, but it is important to note that were not determinant. There are 3 committees that received votes from a majority of the Town Council for which OCA is not recommending a liaison, and 5 committees that received fewer votes than a majority of the Town Council for which OCA is recommending a liaison (including one committee that received 0 votes). At the end of this process OCA had identified 13 committees that might warrant a Town Council liaison. Further discussion then narrowed in on the following 9 committees:

Affordable Housing Trust

The Affordable Housing Trust ("the Trust") is a committee that has and will likely continue to submit to the Town Council recommendations and policies that require Town Council action. In the first year of the Council the Trust submitted a recommendation regarding the redevelopment of the East Street School and a housing priorities policy. Current topics under consideration by the Trust include the establishment of a 40R District and the identification of Town land for affordable housing development, both of which would require Town Council action.

Board of Health

The Board of Health is a powerful regulatory body. Although its regulations are not subject to Town Council review or approval, they can be impactful on the local business community. OCA felt that it is important that the Town Council be apprised of these actions. See recent tobacco regulations and the response of the local business community as an example.

Board of License Commissioners

Like the Board of Health, the Board of License Commissioners is a powerful regulatory body whose decisions are not subject to Town Council approval but can be impactful on the local business community. See recently adopted BYOB and Alcohol Food Service regulations as examples. Further, recent actions by the Board of License Commissioners, such as those surrounding Porta, have generated significant community interest. OCA believes it is important that the Town Council be apprised of this committee's actions and regulations and that there is a line of communication between the Council and the committee.

Community Preservation Act Committee

The Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC) submits appropriations recommendations for action by the Town Council that concern funds sourced from local taxes. This meets two of OCA's criteria for liaisons.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging does not meet any of OCA's criteria for a liaison. However, members of OCA felt that given the increasing senior population in Amherst, and an increasing recognition of the need to address issues facing this population, appointing a liaison to the Council on Aging would help elevate the needs of Amherst's aging population to the Council's attention.

Disability Access Advisory Committee

Like Council on Aging, the Disability Access Advisory Committee does not meet any of OCA's criteria for a liaison but does represent a committee that advocates for an important population that is often marginalized. There is also overlap between the needs served by this committee and those of Amherst's aging population. Appointing a liaison to the Disability Access Advisory Committee would help elevate the needs of Amherst's people with disabilities to the Council's attention.

LSSE Commission

Like Council on Aging and the Disability Access Advisory Committee, LSSE Commission does not meet any of OCA's criteria for a liaison. However, there are two reasons OCA felt this committee should have a liaison. First, with the Town currently developing two new playgrounds (Groff Park and Kendrick Park) and community concerns around Community Field, members of OCA felt it would be useful for the Council to have a closer relationship with this committee. Second, LSSE serves families and has increasingly worked to ensure programming is accessible to all, including low-income populations. Some members of OCA felt appointing a liaison to the LSSE Commission would help bring to the Council's attention challenges facing LSSE in serving these populations.

Transportation Advisory Committee

The Transportation Advisory Committee may make recommendations that could come to the Town Council for action. This committee received the most votes for a liaison (11). Given that, OCA had very little discussion around this committee.

Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board

The Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board (ZSC) is the body that develops and proposes amendments to the Zoning Bylaws to the Planning Board. Since zoning amendments require action by the Town Council, OCA recommends appointing a liaison to the ZSC. It is important to note that OCA views the ZSC as a separate body from the Planning Board. OCA is recommending a liaison to the ZSC but not to the Planning Board.

Town Manager Communication

There were a number of committees that did not meet OCA criteria but for which OCA considered recommending a liaison because those committees either (1) are of great public interest or (2) have historically been siloed and would benefit from having a conduit for information. OCA is not recommending liaisons for these committees. But OCA is recommending that the Town Council direct the Town Manager to provide regular information to the Council on the actions and issues under consideration by these committees. This will help highlight these committees to the Council and to the public. These committees are:

- Agricultural Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Historical Commission
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- Amherst Center Recreation Working Group
- Board of Assessors

Note that some of these committees may occasionally submit recommendations for action by the Town Council (e.g. the Conservation Commission is considering amendments to the wetlands bylaw), but OCA felt that this occurs irregularly and so does not warrant a liaison.

Elected Bodies

OCA members were opposed to appointing liaisons to elected bodies. Already the Town Council, School Committee, and Library Board of Trustees coordinate through the Joint Capital Planning Committee and the Budget Coordinating Group. OCA felt that it is the responsibility of the Town Council President to maintain a relationship and communication between the Town Council and other elected bodies (School Committee, and Library Board of Trustees, Amherst Housing Authority).



Committees No Longer in Existence

There are three committees in the spreadsheet that no longer exist, including one that received votes from a majority of Councilors. They are Downtown Parking Working Group (DPWG), DPW/Fire Station Advisory Committee, and the Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC). While OCA obviously would not recommend appointing a liaison to a defunct committee, it wanted to acknowledge that if any of these committees were reconstituted in some form they likely would warrant a Town Council liaison. One member of OCA wanted to highlight that even though DPWG has been dissolved, the Town Council should always have a relationship with any future committee that grapples with parking issues.

Outstanding Questions

There are a number of questions that OCA intends to consider but did not have sufficient time to discuss at its 12-20-2019 meeting. They are as follows:

- Is it important that every Councilor serve as a liaison?
- Should Councilors be allowed to serve as liaisons to multiple committees?
- Should the Town Council President and Vice President serve as liaisons?

Moving Forward

At the Town Council retreat on 9-21-2019, Councilors indicated committees to which they would prefer to serve as a liaison. However, because that was several months ago and preceded revisions to Town Council Rules of Procedure governing the liaison role, and because Councilor Standing Committee appointments may change in the near future, OCA suggests that after the Town Council decides which committees will have liaisons that the Town Council President poll Councilors on their liaison preferences. After that, OCA is ready to take on the role of recommending liaison appointments.

OCA also wants to emphasize as Councilors consider committees to which they may want to serve as a liaison that the expectation of liaisons is that they read the minutes and packets of that committee, maintain communication with the Chair, and use that information to update the Town Council, but that liaisons are not expected to attend the meetings.

Outreach, Communications, & Appointments Committee Membership:

Evan Ross, Chair, Town Councilor District 4
Alisa Brewer, Vice Chair, Town Councilor at-Large
Darcy DuMont, Town Councilor District 5
George Ryan, Town Councilor District 3
Sarah Swartz, Town Councilor District 1

APPENDIX A: Spreadsheet from Ad Hoc Rules of Procedure Committee with results from 9-21-2019 Town Council retreat

Name of body	Ad Hoc ROP Priority Group Rating	Votes from 9/21 Council Retreat	Numbers of Councilors who have attended
Affordable Housing Trust	1	9	5
Amherst Redevelopment Authority	1	1	0
Amherst School Committee	1	3	8
Community Preservation Action Committee (CPAC)	1	9	4
Downtown Parking Working Group (DPWG)	1	7	4
Jones Library Trustees	1	0	3
Planning Board (Zoning Subcommittee thereof)	1	8	7
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)	1	11	5
Agricultural Commission	2	7	1
Amherst Media Board of Directors	2	2	1
Board of Health	2	4	0
Board of License Commissioners	2	6	6
Conservation Commission	2	7	1
Disability Access Advisory Committee	2	3	2
Human Rights Commission	2	3	2
Personnel Board	2	1	0
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)	2	0	1
Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)	2	3	0
Ranked-Choice Voting Commission	2	2	0
Amherst Center Recreation Working Group	3	1	1
Amherst Housing Authority	3	3	1
Board of Assessors	3	0	0
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Committee	3	4	3
Council on Aging (separate from Senior Center)	3	1	0
Cultural Council	3	0	0
Design Review Board	3	1	2
Dog Park Task Force	3	0	0
DPW/Fire Station Advisory Committee	3	1	2
Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC) (1996)	3	2	0
Hampshire Regional Emergency Planning Committee	3	0	0

Historical Commission	3	1	1
Local Historic District Commission	3	1	1
LSSE Commission	3	0	3
Munson Memorial Building Trustees	3	0	0
Public Art Commission	3	4	0
Public Shade Tree Committee	3	0	2
Recycling & Refuse Management Committee	3	1	2
Registrar of Voters	3	0	0
Sister City Committee: Kanegasaki	3	0	1
Sister City Committee: La Paz Centro	3	0	0
Water Supply Protection Committee	3	0	0
Wayfinding Internal Working Group	3	1	0
Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)	3	2	4
Energy and Climate Action Committee	TC	NA	NA
UMass Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High Risk Drinking	TC	NA	NA
UTAC	TC	NA	NA